# FINAL REPORT

**19970406**

**SEAGER WHEELER FARM & DIVERSIFIED FARMING SYSTEM PROGRAM**

**March 2002**
**Funded by the Agri-Food Innovation Fund**

**Prepared by: Seager Wheeler Historic Farm Inc.**

AGRI-FOOD INNOVATION FUND

Canada

Saskatchewan

Enclosed is a report on the project," Diversified Farming System" #19970406

A. Summary:

1. Partners: Sask. Soil Conservation Ass'n, AFIF, SAF, Monsanto, Ducks Unlimited, PFRA, and the Riverbend Huttarian Colony.
2. One of the primary objectives of the Seager Wheeler Farm is to give extension organizations and private companies a platform to host producer extension days. The main objective is to increase the adoption of diversified but sustainable farming practice.
3. Direct seeding is done on all the crops on the farm. This includes perennial forages and winter crops. By extending their rotations with forages they can solve many of the disease and weed problems they face in a short rotation.
4. Demonstrate the new species of saskatoons, sour cherries and apples. Are they viable?
5. Have a demonstration of edible and aromatic herbs and spices that can be grown in central Sask.

B. Technical Report:

1. We hosted Seeding Trends 2001 this year. We had 400 producers come out to attend morning seminars and attend the afternoon spraying and seeding demos. This year the theme was " Direct seeding realities after 5 years or more of direct seeding." We had a lively panel discussion on how their soil organic matter has changed and how the weed species have changed and how disease has affected them. The panel and seminar was quite positive in general on the future of direct seeding and that the benefits greatly out weighed the negatives overall. We had 10 companies demonstrate their seeding drills and 6 sprayer companies. John Bennett was our noon hour speaker on carbon sequestering and carbon credits.
2. We had a summer tour of our forage plots and the use of perennial forages in our cropping rotations. This fall we prepared a 40 acre field to be seeded to pedigreed seed alfalfa next year. The field will be pollinated with leaf cutter bees. It will compliment the alfalfa variety trials we already have on the farm.
3. We hosted a pruning and grafting day on April 30th and 65 participants enrolled. Dr. Bob Bohrs, Clarence Peters and Rick Sawatsky were the resource leaders. The orchard had a bumper crop of saskatoons, cherries and apples. The sour cherries were such a hit with the tourists that they demanded they could pick some to take home. Sour cherries will be as big a crop as saskatoons as soon as enough stock is

available. We plan on tripling the sour cherry plantings at the SWF. We have added a drip system and the weed badger has helped in the weeding a lot.

4. Our demo of medicinal, aromatic and culinary herbs were moved to the flower garden area and were studied by hundreds of visitors all summer.
5. Conclusion: Direct seeding is here for the foreseeable future. This past drought year showed that direct seeding not only kept the soil from drifting, it gave a small crop where conventional farming gave a disaster. Germination in dry conditions is critical. Direct seeding lengthens that window. The extended rotation using forages will only increase.
6. Conclusion: Sour cherries are the most viable commercial fruit crop of the prairies. The colour, quality and lack of diseases and pests will allow organic production of this fruit.

C. Personnel: We hired two technicians to assist in the orchard and to help organize and deliver our producer days. The colony ladies did much of the picking of the fruit on a shared basis.

D. Equipment: A John Deere 2130 was rented for the weed badger. We also used it for cultivating the orchard and mowing around plots. Our board members voluntarily farmed the larger fields of forages and annual crops.

E. Shared results: Our producer days are where most of our results are shared. We also have a booth at the Crop Production Show as well as Garden Scape.